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STUDY SHOWS NEW D.A.R.E. PROGRAM HELPS YOUTHS DECIDE AGAINST USING DRUGS

~ Program Could Have Broader Implications Around the Country ~

Akron, OH – The University of Akron today released results of the evaluation of the new D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) 7th grade curriculum. The findings show improvements in students' decision-making skills, drug refusal skills, and beliefs that drug use is socially inappropriate. The new curriculum is delivered through D.A.R.E., which operates in 80 percent of U.S. school districts. The study was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"The new D.A.R.E. curriculum comes at a critical time in light of the most recent National Household Survey report showing an increase in substance abuse among our nation's youth. These findings suggest important changes that will make D.A.R.E., which is already the largest prevention delivery system in the nation, a more effective intervention," said J. Michael McGinnis, Sr. Vice-President of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The research results are based on findings from an ongoing five-year study of the new D.A.R.E. science-based curriculum, which is being tested in six U.S. Cities—Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Newark (NJ), New Orleans, and St. Louis. The study involves over 15,000 students from 83 high schools and their 122 middle schools. Half of these high schools and middle schools were randomly assigned to receive the new D.A.R.E. program while the others were assigned to a control group for comparison purposes.

"The positive findings are very encouraging," said Dr. Zili Sloboda, the study's principal investigator. "The new curriculum showed an improvement in skills and beliefs that make students more resistant to substance abuse. Even more exciting is the fact that the new curriculum is a first step in a process for preparing children for the at-risk years."

The findings show:

- **More students had better decision-making skills.** The research found that decision-making skill scores for those schools receiving the new curriculum were **6 percent** higher than for control group schools;

(more)

- **More students found drug use socially inappropriate and believed fewer peers used drugs:** Results show that the schools that received the new D.A.R.E. curriculum show as much as a **19 percent** reduction in normative beliefs, showing that more students perceive substance use by their peers not to be as common and acceptable.
- **More students learned how to refuse drugs:** Refusal skills were significantly higher -- **5 percent** -- among treatment students compared to control students.
- **Fewer students reported intent to use inhalants:** Scores were significantly lower by as much as **4 percent** with respect to intent to use inhalants for those students who received the new D.A.R.E. curriculum.

“This is exactly what Congress asked us to do: work with the top researchers to integrate the latest in science into the D.A.R.E program. This is great news and we will now move forward in making this state-of-the-science program available to communities across the country in September 2003,” said Glenn Levant, President of D.A.R.E. America.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grant making in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost; to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse -- tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

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